

United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

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Chairman Menendez Opening Remarks at Today's Nominations Hearing

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, delivered the below statement, as prepared for delivery, at today's nominations hearing.

The remarks follow:

"Today we have three nominees before the Committee: Heather Higinbottom to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, Dr. Sarah Sewall as Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, and Richard Stengel nominated to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy.

One thing these three nominees will have in common – should they be confirmed – is responsibility in one way or another for the development and implementation of policies that touch on who will be in a position to represent America and how American values will be reflected around the world.

Our first panelist is Heather Higinbottom who – if confirmed – will play a key role with respect to two priorities of mine – determining who represents the United States abroad, and our policies to protect them.

For 20 years I've been pressing the Department on the issues of diversity and minority recruitment and retention. In my view, our Foreign Service personnel should mirror the diversity of the nation. It's our strength as a nation and we should capitalize on it. Last year the State Department completed a three-year hiring effort to increase the workforce. For a Department that ranks near the bottom when it comes to diversity, one would have expected a focus on doing more to diversify the workforce. Instead we saw only some gains by Asian-Americans and African-Americans and virtually no gains for Hispanic-Americans. In fact, their overall numbers decreased in terms of percentage. I

would like to hear your assessment of where we are and what the future holds in terms of recruitment policies.

On embassy security, as Deputy Secretary, you will be responsible for how the Department's security programs and apparatus are integrated with policy-level decisions, and I would like to know how you plan on remaining intimately involved in and transparent about security issues around the world.

Attacks against our personnel and facilities are likely to continue as Al Qaida, its affiliates -- and other terrorist groups -- continue to wage a global war against us. The recent military-style suicide-attack in Herat against our consulate, although successfully repulsed by Diplomatic Security and Afghan personnel, is evidence of the resolve and resources of these groups.

These concerns, in addition to your views on how as Deputy Secretary you would help steer the State Department through a period in which resources are likely to be scarce and will require careful management, are issues that I hope to hear your thoughts on today.

Our second panelists today are Dr. Sarah Sewall -- nominated to be Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights and Richard Stengel to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy.

Dr. Sewall will have a significant portfolio responsible for 5 bureaus overseeing Conflict and Stabilization Operations; Counterterrorism; Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; International Narcotics and Law Enforcement; and Population, Refugees, and Migration. The new mandate of this position is to build and oversee a coherent capacity in the Department that promotes stability and security in conflict affected and fragile states -- and to support democratic practices, human rights, and humanitarian policies.

It is a large and complex portfolio and I am interested to hear Dr. Sewall's plans and intentions when it comes to civilian security in Latin America; Syria's growing refugee problem; and human trafficking and women's issues. I'm also interested in learning more about her plans in her expected concurrent role as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Affairs.

Mr. Stengel, would be the Secretary's principal advisor on public diplomacy issues. He would manage all public diplomacy resources and oversee efforts to build lasting ties through cultural diplomacy. He would also help shape foreign public opinion, including oversight of the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications. He is an internationally acclaimed author and journalist, Managing Editor of Time Magazine, and brings 30 years of communications experience to his new role -- if confirmed.

Mr. Stengel, we look forward to your views on current public diplomacy efforts around the world. I would be interested in your views on how we might maximize the role of new media and technologies in our national interest.

With that, let me turn to Senator Corker if he has any remarks he wishes to add.”

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